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RATIONALISM  
AND  
REVELATION.

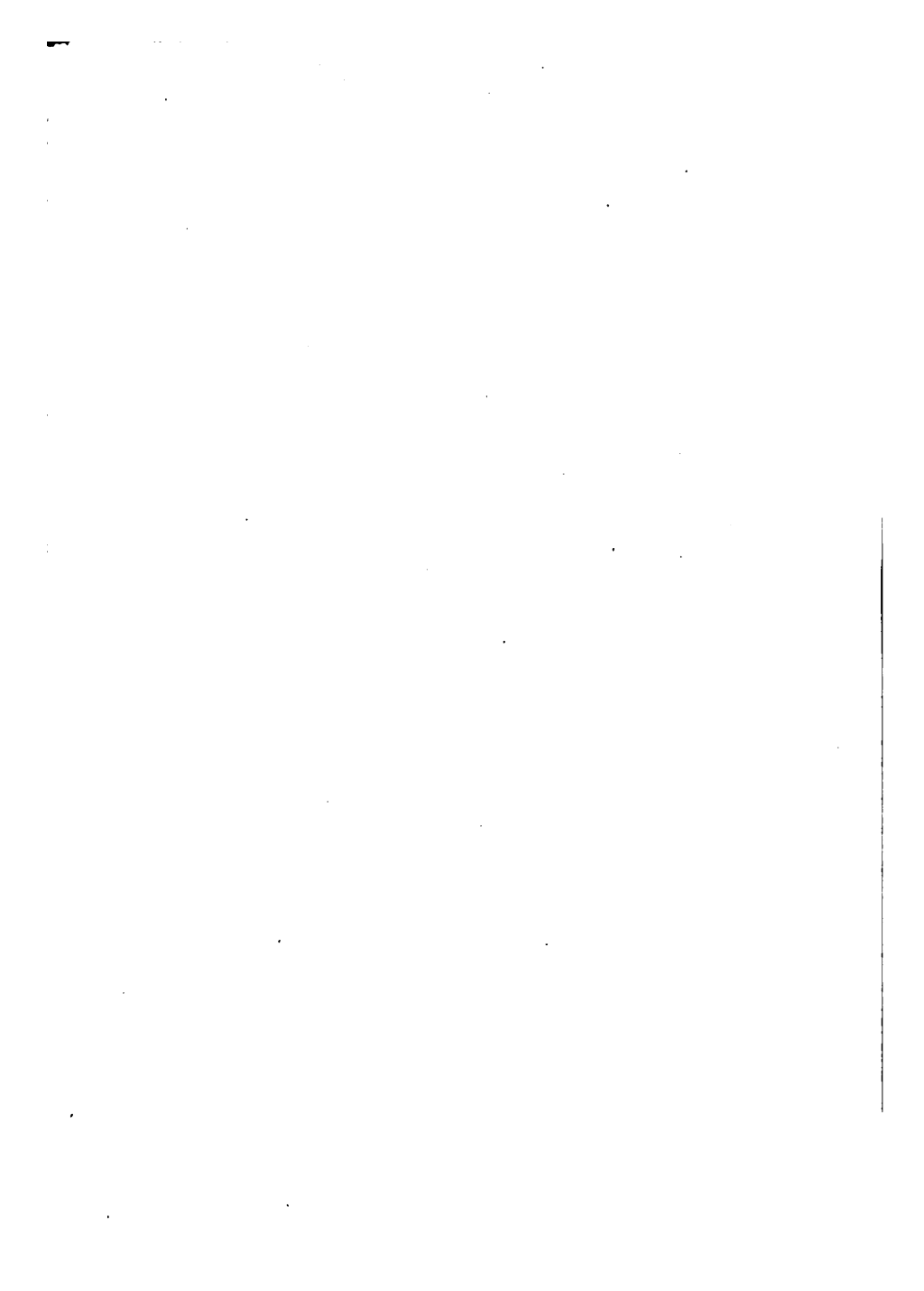
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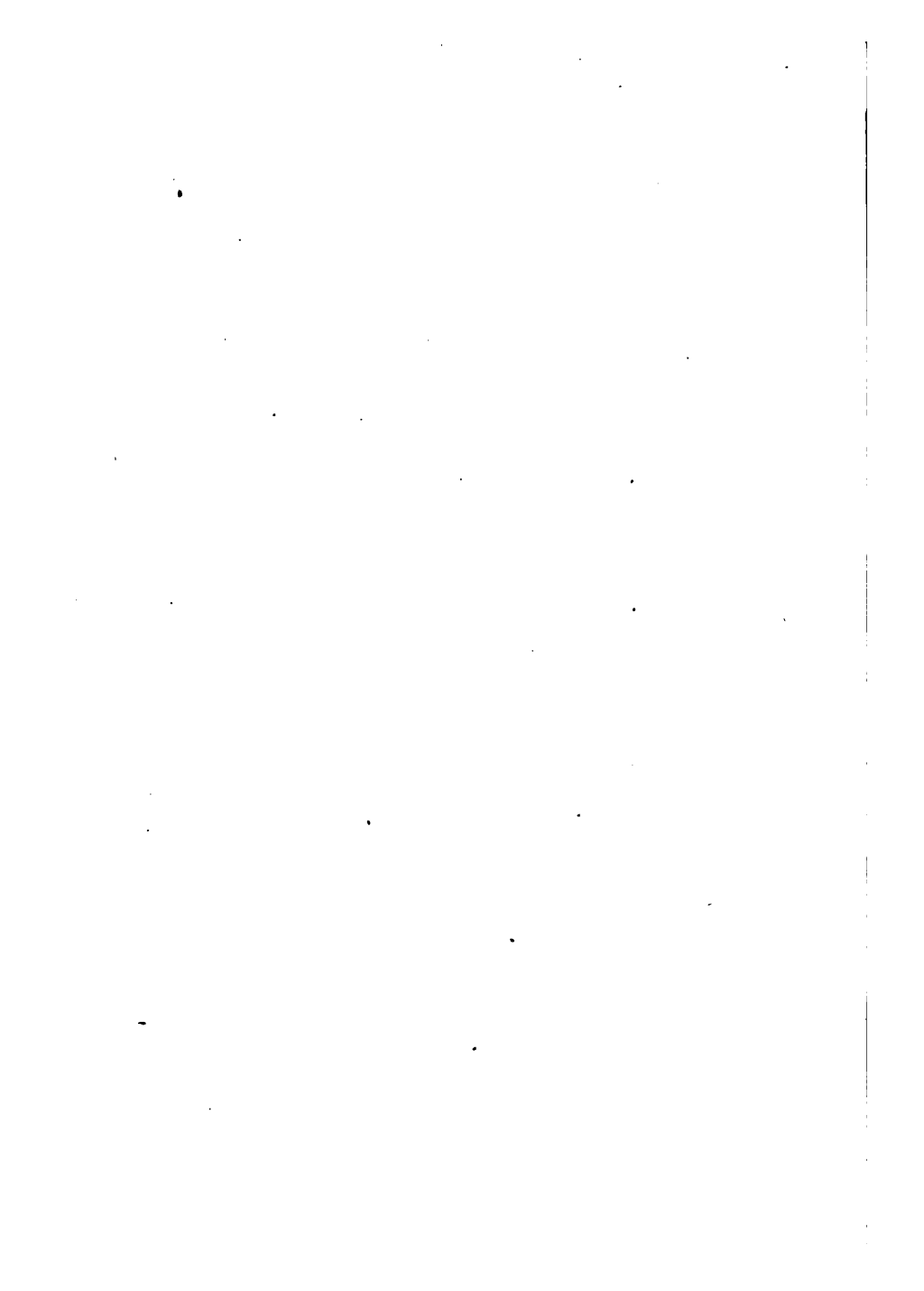
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# RATIONALISM

AND

## REVELATION.



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“Every where we perceive a certain innocent but futile labour, which attaches itself to questions and inquiries equally inaccessible and without results—which has no other object than to satisfy the restless curiosity of minds. \* \* \* \*”

“What time and talent have men wasted in metaphysical lucubrations!”—GUIZOT’S “Lectures on Modern History.”

“The Soul is the principle of Faith.”—SCHLEGEL’S “Philosophy of Life.”

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LONDON:  
LONGMAN, GREEN, & CO.

1865.

110. K. 30.



## FAITH AND REASON.

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IF, when standing on the brink of a coal-pit, we gaze down the black abyss, and observe the waggons laden with the fuel, successively mounting through that Erebus-like darkness, we, in these enlightened days may exclaim, without fear of being considered visionary speculatists, "Coal is the embodiment of power derived from the sun!" Nay, so far from our assertion being considered as false, visionary, or unphilosophical, the whole array of modern science and discovery supports and verifies our statement. A thin slice of coal when subjected to microscopic analysis, presents to us the cellular and vascular structure peculiar to the organization of plants, and which we look for in vain in all other mineral or inorganic substances. Again, the product of the chemical analysis is altogether vegetable: *tannin* and *resin*, two compounds peculiar to the vegetable kingdom, have been discovered in it; and the artificial formation of coal from wood, by Sir James Hall, has silenced



all doubts on the subject.\* However, had such a theory been advanced a very few generations past, the rash enthusiast, as he would in that age have been deemed, would have either been treated with scorn, or taken care of by his friends, to say the least of the consequences of his rashness. Indeed, that black, ugly, dirty substance which we call coal, brought up as it is from such Egyptian-like darkness, and from amidst noxious gases—gases so noxious that without due precaution animal life is extinguished by them—this black, ugly, dirty substance, both from its appearance and from the depth and darkness of the

*difficile antrum, nulloque penetrabile astro,*  
whence it is taken, appears so utterly opposed to all our ideas of sunlight, of beauty, and of life, that we cannot, except through the aid which modern science has given us, conceive that coal is decomposed vegetable matter, and that the plant from which it was formed—those of the carboniferous æra—were graceful, lovely, and elegant, as those which now beautify and adorn the mountain, the valley, and the plain.

Not only this, but that substance called *shale*, which is in immediate contact with coal—in which

\* Professor Phillips: indeed, Modern Science is entirely unanimous upon the vegetable origin of coal.

as it were, coal is encased—this shale, contains the most exquisitely delicate, well defined, and perfect impressions of the plants of the carboniferous period. Sometimes these impressions are contained in the body of the coal-seam itself, layers of shale and coal alternating with each other. This kind of deposit is the most remarkable for the great delicacy and beauty of the vegetable impressions found between the laminæ of coal. These beds strongly resemble a mass of tobacco-leaves, as they are pressed closely together in a hogshead, and still retain their brownish-yellow colour, when first exposed to the air.\* Yet, in former times, such appearances were considered mere *lusi naturæ*—mere freaks of nature—and not as enforcing the truth of any particular hypothesis; and during those periods of intellectual darkness, any attempt at innovation was surely followed by condign punishment. The history of the progress of science may be said indeed to be a history of persecution. The mind at the mention of the progress of science is insensibly carried back to the days of Galileo and the Inquisition; to the days of the first anatomists; and to those dark periods of history when attempts at human progress were certain to be combated with all the

\* Professor Phillips. Consult also any standard work on the subject.

rigour of superstitious bigotry and Inquisitorial cruelty ; to those times when to be scientific was deemed to be heretical ; and when to be content to remain quietly ignorant was considered as one of the best proofs of Christian orthodoxy. If in those dark times of the enslavement of the human mind by the intolerant conservatism of a bigoted and jealous priesthood, such a theory had been advanced as the carboniferous theory, it would have condemned the promoters either to the dungeons of the Holy Office, or the flames of an *Auto da fé*. But to resume. We know now perfectly well that the solar rays must be considered as the cause which enabled the vegetation of the carboniferous period (as it is usually termed) to extract the peculiar kind of nourishment it required from the oxygen with which that peculiar kind of nourishment was combined ; in fact, to take carbon from the oxygen with which that carbon was combined. So then, "Coal is the embodiment of power originally derived from the sun." This fact is arrived at by a process of pure reasoning and demonstration.

Lord Bacon long ago asserted that "heat is to be regarded as motion." This, to his contemporaries, must have seemed a most rash and indefinable assertion ; yet modern experimental

science has demonstrated the correctness of Bacon's theory. Sir William Armstrong and Captain Noble determined, by experiment, the loss of effect in a shot (due to its crushing against iron plates) *by the heat elicited by the shot*; Joule's law (as it is termed) and the known velocity of the shot, enabled them to compute the number of dynamical units of heat, representing the whole mechanical power (and *momentum* is neither more nor less than *weight* multiplied into *velocity*) of the projectile, and by ascertaining the number of units developed in it by impact, the power which took effect upon the shot, instead of upon the plate, was arrived at.\* Here, again, we have reasoning accompanied by demonstration.

Major Navez, of the Belgian Artillery, has invented a beautiful instrument to determine, by means of electro-magnetism, the velocity of projectiles. Nature is thus compelled to yield up her secrets, vanquished by her own weapons—

*Natura suis armis victa !*

Now, these facts which we have been considering are not aimed at merely by guess-work, or by chance, or by any process of intellectual divination—*natura non facit saltum*—nature is calmly progressive in her *modus operandi*, and so is science,

\* British Association, 1863.

seeking to comprehend these things, also calmly progressive in its method of proceeding. And yet so infinite are these operations of nature, that however many facts we may discover, there is no fear of the human intellect ever penetrating more than a very limited number of them! Happy for the scientific man perhaps that it is so; for could he know all, having no more to discover,

“*Æstuat infelix augusto in limite mundi.*”  
might well be applied to the mind possessing such attainments. No fear of that, for now we only “know in part,” and never learn really much

“ — whilst this muddy vesture of decay,  
Doth grossly close us in — ”

Science will admit nothing as fact which is not capable of demonstration. She will not be convinced by the most ingenious dialectics unless demonstrations accompany them. Yet, when by means of laborious and jealous experiment, the demonstration — the actual demonstration — is arrived at, no vision of poet or magician ever presented to their votaries such wonders as are seen by the enraptured student, when the mysteries (so to speak) of nature are disclosed to him as the reward of his patient and long prosecuted labours.

We frequently find whilst considering the great minds which adorned mankind before the

birth of experimental philosophy, adumbrations of recent discovery ; but still, only adumbrations and not accepted as facts during the age in which these mighty intellects flourished. It is in the nature of things to be so, unless some impostor makes violent assertions which gain the credulity of the vulgar. But these shadowings forth of Plato, Socrates, and others were put forward, with few exceptions, modestly and distrustfully. We must, except of course, Aristotle, the great master of the \*Dogmatic Philosophy, and the various sects to which his philosophy gave birth. Now the difference between the popularity of the mere impostor and the non-popularity of the true philosopher with his fine mental instincts I conceive to be this. The impostor gains a short lived popularity by advancing what in the great majority of instances he knows to be false, and is followed for a time by an enthusiastic crowd of admiring proselytes. The untruthfulness of the doctrines endeavoured to be promulgated by their master, however, at last becomes patent, and he is left deserted and alone. The true philosopher is content to consider himself *in statu pupillari* and to

\* The Institutiones Dialecticæ of Ramus which were published in 1543 in opposition to the Aristotelian (peripatetic) philosophy, took for their basis, the philosophy (or at all events the logic) of Plato.

modestly prosecute his inquiries, content—to use the noble language of Dr. Chalmers—with the homage of the exalted few, rather than the plaudits of the multitude—content, to resemble less the blazing of a bonfire for the regaling of a mob, than the quiet, though enduring lustre of a star.\* *Laudari a Laudato* is the goal for which he strives, content with that Atticus like praise—that precious aroma, exquisite though not copious—yet with which the finer and more intellectual of mankind are amply satisfied.

But how many schools soever there have been of Philosophy, the Baconian is the one which must be named with the greatest reverence and gratitude; for is to that method of investigation recommended by Bacon that we owe all modern improvement and progress. The Baconian Philosophy has lengthened life; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunder-bolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of human vision;

\* Moral and Intellectual Condition of Man.

it has multiplied the power of the human muscles ; it has accelerated motion ; it has annihilated distance ; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business ; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without the aid of horses, and the ocean in ships which run many knots an hour against the wind. These are but a part of its fruits, and of its first fruit. For it is a philosophy which never rests, which has never attained, which is never perfect. Its law is progress. A point which yesterday was invisible is its goal to day, and will be its starting point to morrow.\*

The dreamy Philosophy of Athens and the interminable babble of the wrangling disputants who followed that philosophy, produced nothing but useless logomachies and unmeaning theories—theories that never have benefitted and never can benefit, mankind. It was reserved for Bacon alone to utilise philosophy, and to point out the method by which utilisation was to be obtained. This method was simply to make nature herself her own interpreter by subjecting her to the crucible of

\*Macaulay. Essay on Lord Bacon.



experiment and by conquering her with her own weapons; to make the reason of men, subservient to their wants, and to wean them from pursuing the *ignus fatuus* of the Platonic philosophy. Mankind have fortunately for themselves, taken advantage of the grand scheme submitted to them, and the consequences and results have been those mentioned, and others of daily occurrence. The question which the modern philosophers propounded was not "Quid decus aut quid non;" but "quid *utile* aut quid non." They ceased to endeavour to press into their service those

"viewless spirits of the elements,"

which occupied so large a space in the minds of their predecessors, and were content with a less romantic, but infinitely more fruitful method of investigation than the pursuit of exoteric signs and wonders.

But intervening between these two grand eras in the history of the human mind, whilst Imperial Rome was the grand centre of all virtue, all depravity, all refinement, all ignorance, and all knowledge, when she was almost mistress of the world, and the common centre toward which all men turned their gaze, and from which radiated laws which regulated the destiny of well-nigh the whole civilized world; whilst all that was most

refined, learned, and valorous was concentrated at Rome; in the age of Virgil, Cicero, Ovid, Horace, Livy; when the polite\* Augustus was surrounded by all that was most brilliant and distinguished in the attainment of learning, of poetry, and of wit—whilst Rome was thus polished, civilized, and prosperous, and men were hourly engaged in the gratification of their senses, and the pursuit of pleasure—some poor shepherds, watching their flocks by night, beheld the heavens opened and an innumerable company of the heavenly host, who, with hymns of triumph and of love, announced the approaching birth of Christ. Signs and wonders ceased not, and at length the Magi met together where the infant Jesus was laid in the manger of a little inn. Humble as was the hostelry, and poor as was its accommodation, yet, from its narrow precincts arose the giant form of the Christian religion, destined to triumph over the prostrate idols of Paganism, and to turn the whole current of human thought into a channel widely different from that in which it had been flowing.

\* Virgil pays Augustus this graceful compliment:—

“ ——— victorque volentes  
Per populos dat jura, viamque affectat Olympo.”

The doctrines of the Christian religion were so utterly opposed to any that had before been promulgated; they were at the same time so simple, and so abstruse; so mild, and yet so terrible in their awful denunciations; the founder of the sect—poor, despised, and rejected of men, yet possessing the power and resources of Omnipotence, and ministered to by holy angels; without sin, and yet bearing the sins of the whole world; the very concentration, essence, and great fountain of life, yet partaking of food and laying down to sleep; the perfect God, ever present in all space throughout the endless ages of a blissful eternity; yet the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, weary, hungry, and way-worn, exclaiming pathetically that the very foxes had holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but yet he (poor wayfarer!) had not where to lay his head!

Such a contradictory assemblage of qualities had never before been witnessed! Many of the sects had veiled under an exterior appearance of sensual mortification,

“The pride that apes humility.”

\* St. Luke asserts *the whole world* was under the dominion of Rome, in contradiction to the facts of the case. He *means*, probably, the Roman Empire. “And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that *the whole world* should be taxed.” (Luke ii.)

The Sophists, Pythagoreans, Epicureans, and others, had vainly attempted, by a singular process of false reasoning, to monopolize the world of philosophy to themselves, but had been successfully defeated in their endeavours, and the falsity of their premises, the unsoundness of their arguments, and, above all, the dishonesty and worldly-mindedness which pervaded the whole of their conduct, fully exposed.

The newly-founded sect professed the doctrines of neither Academic, Epicurean, or Stoic, but boldly announced that the knowledge of this world was but darkness and folly; that so far from human knowledge availing anything, it was necessary for the loftiest intellect and the most gigantic mental power to bow itself humbly; to become as a little child; and to yield up its whole understanding to God; meekly consenting to be taught by his spirit. The different sects of philosophers had long declaimed against the tenets held by their opponents, but it was reserved for Christianity to denounce the learning of the whole human world as folly; to substitute itself in the place of worldly philosophy; and to promise eternal rewards to those who embraced the new religion, and acted according to its precepts. Yet in some things the new religion might be said to

resemble that philosophy upon whose ruins the temple of Christianity was about to be raised. The passive patience of the Stoics might seem to bear an analogy to Christian resignation; and the lofty dreams of \*Plato upon the immortality of the soul, might seem to resemble the magnificent panorama of futurity exhibited by Jesus. But the Platonists were not *convinced* as to the truth of their metaphysics; their speculations appear to have been conducted in a dreamy, abstract manner, and to have been devoid of the warmth, fire, and energy of the zealous Christian. A prophet, or apostle, inspired by the Deity, can alone exercise a †*lawful* dominion over the faith of mankind; and the theology of Plato might have been for ever confounded with the philosophical visions of the Academy, the Porch, and the Lyceum, if the name and divine attributes of the *Logos* had not been confirmed by the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the evangelists. ‡

We may perhaps venture to remark that Faith is warm and Reason cold, and that there is an

\* The Platonists admired the beginning of the Gospel of St. John as containing an exact transcript of their own principles. Augustin de Civitat. Dei. x. 29. Amelius apud Cyril, advers. Julian 1. viii. p. 283. (Vide "Decline and Fall," Ch. 21. *note*.)

† It was said of Christ that he taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes.—Matt. vii. 29.

‡ "Decline and Fall," Ch. xxi.

enthusiasm belonging to faith unattainable by unassisted reason. Pure Faith, as distinguished from Reason, may be defined to be belief in Revelation as contained in Scripture, in contradistinction to those things of which we obtain a knowledge by means of our natural faculties—of our Reason in fact. It has been argued by those who deny the truth of Revelation that it is contrary to the evidence of our senses. Now, as Revelation is perfectly apart from any sensual experience of ours; as in fact our senses have no engagement in the matter; so cannot Revelation be contrary to the *evidence* of those senses. The Word of God is a Revelation; it is *not* an analysis. It is a matter of Faith, then; not of Reason. When we commence trusting to our natural faculties for the full interpretation of things which are wholly spiritual, the very finite nature of those natural faculties must prove an insuperable barrier to the comprehension of an infinite subject.

Reverting to the facts enumerated at the commencement of this essay; suppose a child were told of them and commanded to believe them, to receive them as indisputable facts, the child, having faith in its instructor, gives full credit to these facts, although no process of its own natural, unassisted faculties, could have enabled it to have

known that they existed. The child has had no experience in the matter, but placing implicit faith in its instructor, it believes what is submitted to its credit. Such a child, whilst believing so implicitly, would merit the praise of Bacon.

“*Dignius credere quam scire.*”\*

Not so credulous is the mind accustomed to reason upon the matters presented to it. That mind must have proof that things actually *are*, before it will admit them into the domain of fact. It is this demand for positive proof on the part of many of the scientific and intellectual, which so often causes some of the brightest stars in the galaxy of genius to be clouded with the mists and vapour fogs of absolute unbelief: and it is this wish to naturalize the things revealed by Christ, which is the meaning of so many well-meaning Christians denying the *plenary* inspiration of Scripture.† It has been finely said that “childhood often holds a truth with its feeble fingers, which the grasp of manhood cannot retain, and which it is the pride of age to recover.”‡

But does Scripture, “which contains all things necessary to *Salvation*,” profess naturalism, or is it

\*de Augm. lib. ix. c. i.

†We allude to Revelation as contained in the New Testament.

‡John Ruskin.

only applicable to *spiritual* things? It has been very forcibly said: "the present theology is too deeply immersed in an indiscriminate and unthinking Bibliolatry. But even on the fullest admission of inspiration, the slightest rational reflection must show the unreasonableness of looking for indications of the *inspired* character of Scripture, in relation to any other subjects than those of its proper *spiritual* communications; and even these, in the *mode* of their introduction, are always specially *adapted* to the apprehensions and conditions of those to whom they were addressed, and always to be applied subject to the due discrimination of circumstances, times, parties, and *dispensations*."

"Thus, more precisely with respect to the subject of 'Creation,' the writers of the New Testament, doubtless adopting themselves the existing belief respecting it, yet never dwell upon that belief in detail;\* nor insist on any of its peculiarities. They refer to it, in fact, only in a general sense as opposing the superstitions of heathenism,† and teaching the Gentiles that the

\* We may except one solitary instance (an exception which eminently proves the rule), when the Apostle is specially arguing with the *Hebrews*, and, referring to their belief in the Divine rest on the seventh day, applies it *figuratively* to the future and everlasting rest of the faithful. (Heb. iv. 4.)

† Acts xvii. 25.



elements of the material world, which, either directly or under various mythical personifications, had been the object of their worship, were, in reality, the *creatures*, not the *Creator*, to whom alone worship should be given. The only *specific* references made, are those of a more elevated and mysterious nature, involving *no physical ideas*, but referring the work of creation to the Divine Logos; \* probably in refutation of the Gnostics; or, as some think, in giving a Christian sense to them." †

Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation; but is it not useless to attempt to *press* Scripture into the service of Science? is it not unreasonable to suppose that what is purely spiritual can by any means be *materialized* for the use of *human learning*? The precepts and exhortations; the examples and line of moral conduct which are contained in Scripture are the finger-posts which will, if properly observed, infallibly lead us to Heaven; but science and revelation are *not* twin sisters, and never can be, although it has so often been fondly asserted that they are. Let us

\* John i. 1; Col. i. 16. See Dr. Burton's Bampton Lectures, p. 112.

† The Unity of Worlds and of Nature, in three Essays, by the Rev. Baden Powell, M.A., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., F.G.S., Savilian Professor of Geometry in the University of Oxford.

take Geology for instance. "All inquirers possessing at once a sound knowledge of geology, and capable of perceiving the undeniable sense of a plain circumstantial narrative, now acknowledge that the whole tenour of geology is in *entire contradiction* to the cosmogony delivered from Sinai; a contradiction which no philological arguments can remove or diminish; a case which no *detailed* interpretations can meet; and which can only be dealt with as a whole." \*

We may feel confident, also, that the line of demarcation now so strongly drawn between the material and the spiritual will never, in our present state of organization, be passed. The very nature of the subject does not admit of such an intermixture. The words of the Roman philosopher, verified by modern discovery, can never apply to spiritualism, without a *new Revelation*: "*Veniet tempus, quo ista quæ nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahat, et longioris ævi diligentia: ad inquisitionem tantorum ætas una non sufficit; veniet tempus quo posterì nostri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur.*" †

\* "Unity of Worlds," also "Primæval History by Kenrich," contains some excellent remarks upon this subject. And also, Doctor Temple, the author of "The Education of the World," in "Essays and Reviews," stated in a sermon preached in London, that he considered Genesis a *poem*, to a great extent, and denied its *inspiration*, properly so called.

† Seneca, Nat, Quæst, viii. 25.

With all the respect which we feel for the excellent and well-meaning men who are the religious instructors of our nation, it is impossible not to deplore, that with the very best intentions, many of them attempt to reconcile things which, from their very nature, are irreconcilable. An enthusiastic promoter of these opinions has lately endeavoured to show that reason and faith are, in all instances, compatible, but with all due deference to the learning and good intentions of the Right Reverend Prelate, we cannot allow that he has by any means shewn that they are so : and for this very good reason, that faith—and by faith we understand a full belief in the creed of St. Athanasius—is perfectly incompatible with any form or kind of reasoning process whatsoever, being “*incomprehensible*” in fact, in the very words of the creed itself. But why should not the Church acknowledge this in her public teaching ? why should she not boldly say at once, “materialism and spiritualism cannot, from their very nature, be reconciled ; it is not necessary they should be so ; but the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, and it is only with the spiritual welfare of men that they have to do.” The Bible was certainly never intended as a scientific handy-book, although many of our

divines *profess* to think so. It is more charitable to suppose, that having subscribed the Articles of the Church of England,\* they do not feel justified in any latitudinarianism of doctrine.

The high attainments of science and the lofty discoveries promoted by them are the results of long, laborious, and painful processes. Not only this, but that knowledge which is the result of reason (experiment, experience, improvements and additions to the knowledge transmitted to us by our ancestors and predecessors), is always in a state of progress; "the point which yesterday was invisible is its goal to-day, and will be its starting point to-morrow."† Not so with revealed Scripture. The human mind, from the very nature of its constitution, can make no sort of *progress* in the comprehension of the "incomprehensible." Let us not mistake the full meaning of the word *incomprehensible*. The word signifies neither more nor less than, *quod comprimi non potest*, what cannot by any means or manner

\* In Mr. Higginson's "Free Spirit of the Bible" occurs the following remark: "The free handling of Biblical subjects by men who are bound to the *dogmatic creeds* of the English Church is not—nor, in the nature of the case, can be—thoroughly free on all points."

† Macaulay: "Essay on Lord Bacon."

whatsoever be understood. The mind of Newton and the mind of the ignorant rustic are, as far as the *incomprehensibility* of the mysteries of the Incarnation of Christ, and the Triune Godhead, exactly on a level, nor would any further attainments on the part of the cultivated mind make a greater difference between them, for this simple reason: that the human mind *is* the human mind, and what is "incomprehensible" (we use the word in its *Athanasian* sense) to one mind is incomprehensible to all understandings (human). Those to whom was vouchsafed primary Revelation, were certainly not prepared by any previous course of study to receive it; but on the contrary, were taken, some from their immediate and very humble vocations—unlettered occupations—without anything particularly demonstrative taking place on the occasion. We except, of course, the conversion of St. Paul and some other notable instances of men becoming Christians by force of external circumstances affecting them greatly, and leading to their conversion. The founder of Christianity was not born in a palace, or even under circumstances of affluence; and his after ministry was certainly not performed with the great ones of the earth for companions. Neither was the new religion es-

pecially directed to the schools of philosophy. But we will avail ourselves here of the magnificent diction and thoughts of Gibbon.\* "A chosen society of philosophers, men of a liberal education and curious disposition, might silently meditate and temperately discuss in the garden of Athens or the library of Alexandria, the abstruse questions of metaphysical science. The lofty speculations, which neither convinced the understanding nor agitated the passions of the Platonists themselves, were carelessly overlooked by the idle, the busy, and even the studious part of mankind. But after the *Logos* had been revealed as the sacred object of the faith, the hope, and the religious worship of the Christians; the mysterious system was embraced by a numerous and increasing multitude in every province of the Roman world. Those persons who from their age, or sex, or occupations, were the least qualified to judge, who were the least exercised in the habits of abstract reasoning, aspired to contemplate the economy of the Divine Nature; and it is the boast of Tertullian that a Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages. Where the subject lies so far beyond our reach, the difference between the

\* "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," ch. xxi.

highest and the lowest of human understandings may indeed be calculated as infinitely small."

How is it possible to *reason* upon Revelation when we know comparatively nothing of the commonest phenomena which are constantly taking place around us? There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.\*

"I do believe it: the common world  
Teems out with things we know not; and our mind,  
Too gross for us to scan the mighty whole,  
Knows not how busy all creation is."

Yes, we *know*, in the most extended sense of the word, nothing even of the *common world*; how much less, then, can we know of the secret things of God—of things which are hidden from his angels? Shall *man* deem himself wise, when

"He chargeth his angels with folly;  
And the heavens are not pure in His sight."

Yet there is something which adds considerably to our self-respect when we consider what human knowledge has done and is doing: it is, in fact, impossible to say what may not be attained by the consecutive, accumulated, transmitted knowledge acquired by human capacities (as far as materialism

\* Shakespeare: "Hamlet."

is concerned) in the lapse of ages, for "we are the heirs of all ages,"\* and each succeeding generation is nobly enriched by the labours and researches of the preceding one.

" ————— Hæres

Hæredem alterius, velut unda supervenit undam."

(Hor. Lib. ii. Ep. 2.)

may apply to the heirship of knowledge, as well as to the succession to an estate. And, perhaps, one of the chief reasons of this spirit of the endeavour to justify the ways of God to man, which is now so much the mark of the times, arises from the great brilliancy of the achievements of the human intellect during the last half century. No *material* obstacle has (with certain reservations) been able to shield itself from the all-potent vigour and energy with which it has been assailed. Materials, the most hostile in their uncontrolled natural state, have been converted into corner-stones in the great temple of modern civilisation. Over electricity itself, one of the most intangible, subtle, and dangerous things with which we are acquainted, we have gained, after a long combat, the most perfect control. Never, said Professor

\* Tennyson.—Thucydides, long ago, however, thus expressed himself in relation to his historical writings: "They are the heritage of all posterity."



Owen in his address to a meeting of the British Association, "since the words were written,

'The depths of the sea praise Him,'

have they been so literally verified as when the submarine telegraphic message 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,'\* was transmitted from America to England."

And yet these great deeds of the human intellect, and these exquisite specimens of human ingenuity, are liable to make that very intellect arrogant, and likely also to cause it to imagine that it can, by a series of imperceptible gradations, attain to a more *exact* (we use the word in its material sense) knowledge of those things which, from their very relative constitution, *must* always be incomprehensible. Truly wrote Cowper :

" Knowledge is proud she knows so much ;  
Wisdom is humble that she knows no more."

But whilst considering Faith and Reason, we cannot but touch upon the miracles of Christ. Several of these manifestations of superhuman power are related in the New Testament, and worded with all that attention to detail which is usually given in the narrative of any action of which the narrator has been either an eye-witness or in the society of those who have actually seen

\* Luke ii. 14.

that action performed. Many things which Jesus did whilst on earth are *not* reported, but enough are reported to make us confident of his perfect control over the various forms of matter. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose *that even the world itself* could not contain the books that should be written."\* We must, of course, receive the expression "that even the world itself, &c.," with qualification, in the same manner that "all the world should be taxed"† must not be taken in its exact literal sense, although criticism would be severe upon such expressions did they occur in any profane history. The accounts of the miracles of Christ contained in the Four Gospels are recorded with all the vigour of pristine faith, and that faith infinitely strengthened by the fact that not only had the Evangelists witnessed Christ's miracles, but were themselves able to perform acts of the same nature. The same may be observed in the Acts of the Apostles, where miracles are likewise described with all the undoubting assertions of strong and undoubting faith by the very performers themselves. Reason and Faith were in that age strongly knit together, but the circumstances under which

\* John xxi. 25.

† Luke, ch. ii. 1.

they were so, were altogether exceptional. The wonderful things which those who were living during the lifetime of Christ and his Apostles, actually saw performed by superhuman agency were of course convincing proof before their very eyes. Men will infinitely more readily accept the optical than the aural proof.

“Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.”

If *one* miracle were witnessed, then the belief in an unlimited number of miracles would be easy enough; and we know perfectly well that the testimony of an actual eye-witness is of very much more value than hearsay.\* Any one at all acquainted with jurisprudence must know as regards that portion of the law of evidence, it has not altered since the time of Plautus:

“Pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem.”

The actual presence of Christ and his Apostles must, from the very nature of the human mind, have caused many to believe† who would not otherwise have done so. A man *must* believe the evidence of his own senses; and our Saviour him-

\* *Nihil præter auditum habeo (Cicero)*. I know only by hearsay.

† John xii. 10, 11: “But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.”

self remarked upon this when he said that some believed because they *saw* ; but (he added) "blessed are they that have *not* seen and yet have believed." (John xx. 29, 2 Cor. v. 7, 1 Pet. i. 8.) But despite of these wonderful works of God, unceasing opposition and persecution were the lot of Christ and his disciples ; for the Christian religion was antagonistic to almost all the prejudices of mankind, and entirely antagonistic to their vices and sinful pleasures. That doctrine which was expounded so mildly on Galilean shore, midst sweet green fields, on lofty mountains, or on golden sands ; this doctrine so amiably mild and so persuasively touching, yet waged unceasing, pertinacious, and uncompromising warfare against the enormous vices and unbridled sensuality of the age. God could not be served and Mammon worshipped ; spiritual gravitation, according to the teaching of the new sect, allowed no equipoise between Heaven and Earth ; men were to be weighed in the balance, and the scales would not remain for a moment even ; either they were to divorce themselves from all their fleshly lusts and sensual gratifications, or be considered the *enemies* of God. There was no neutrality, no middle course to be adopted, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." \* These new-born doctrines were

neither romantic reveries or hyperbolic declamations. They were the actual words of God made manifest in the flesh.

The usual object of the miracles of Christ was the benefit of mankind, and not to supply his own human necessities. They were performed in a simple and dignified manner, without any of the empiricism of necromancy. There was generally a large number of witnesses to testify to the instant efficacy of the commands of Christ when He was performing a miracle. The words "Talitha cumi,"\* "Ephphatha," &c.,† and losing the strings of dumb men's tongues, were followed by instantly efficacious effects, which astounded the spectators. "They were, beyond measure, astonished, saying, 'He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.'"‡

There may appear, perhaps, to some minds, a remarkable exception in the miracle recorded in the eleventh chapter of St. Mark's Gospel—that of the barren fig-tree. Doctor Cumming, with his usual ingenuity of textual analysis, thus endeavours to explain the cursing of the fig-tree by Christ: "When Jesus came, and saw leaves and no fruit, it is said He pronounced an anathema

\* Mark v. 41.

† Mark vii. 34.

‡ Mark vii. 37.

upon it—‘no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.’ Now some have very much quarrelled with this miracle. They have said that here the great and blessed Maker seems to indicate temper, as if disappointment at not finding fruit made Him hurriedly and intemperately pronounce a malediction upon the tree. But there is no evidence of anything in this act that was either violent, unnatural, or cruel. That Jesus was angry on many an occasion, I have not the least doubt; but anger is not a sin. It is no more sinful to be angry than to be hungry. The Apostle says, ‘Be ye angry and sin not;’ and very often a hot temper is the atmosphere around the warmest and most generous heart. Anger is only a sin when it degenerates, festers, or corrupts into malignant hate; and hence the importance of that maxim, as a preventive of anger swelling into revenge—‘Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath.’ But there is no evidence here of that; and it is a most interesting fact, that ever as living beings came to Jesus, the subjects of misfortune, he healed them; and that the only instance in which He pronounced a malediction was not upon a living man, but upon a dead and insensible tree. And it was right that, whilst there was so much beneficence, love,

and mercy, it should be seen that what is God's strange work is not unknown or impossible to Him,—the work of righteous retribution.”

“A fig-tree was seen by Jesus, having leaves, and ‘He came, if haply He might find anything thereon; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.’ It has been said by some that the fruit precedes the appearance of the leaves upon the fig-tree, and that it was reasonable to expect figs; but the time of the figs appearing, though there were leaves upon the tree, was not yet come. Just as you see in January the trees prematurely shooting forth buds and leaves, soon again to be nipped, so this fig-tree had prematurely leaves upon it, which were a profession that they embosomed fruit in the midst of them.”\*

“But if the cursing of this tree had been a mere incidental act without a meaning, we should have been less able to defend it; but the fact is, the fig-tree was the great type of the Jews: it is constantly used as such; and we are told that one of the signs of Christ's near approach will be the budding of the fig-tree—that is, the Jews beginning to awake to a sense of their long-lost

\* “Sabbath Readings on St. Mark,” by the Rev. John Cumming, D.D.

privileges, and the hope of their coming glory. Thus our Lord's blasting the fig-tree, because it had the leaves of profession, whilst it was destitute of the fruits of practice, was a most significant act to the Jews who saw it; for it told them that their roots must be dried up, if they did not bring forth in their season those fruits which they were planted to produce, and having cumbered the ground, one, two, three years, the fig-tree must be cut down, or wither to the roots, and waste away, or be thrown to the burning. It was not, therefore, an arbitrary act without a relation to other things, but it was an instructive lesson: and just as Jesus took the corn that grew in the field, the flowers by the way-side, the lilies that grew near Him, and made these the mirrors of bright truths, so He took the fig-tree, blasted and withered it—not because it was criminal, for morally it could not be so, but in order to be an instructive and important lesson to man."

Those acquainted with vegetable physiology will be able to give the credit due to this argument. As, however, in respect of an assertion regarding the velocity of light contained in another work\* of this ingenious writer, it is

\* Manual of Christian Evidence—Chapter on Doctrinal Difficulties.



charitably to be hoped that the following is a mistake of the printer :—" *Light would travel from the earth to the sun in four minutes.*" It is well known that light takes at least  $8\frac{1}{2}$  minutes to travel from the sun to the earth.\* Also, it is a false method of expression to say that "light travels *from* the earth to the sun." Be this as it may, when *reason* is called to the help of *faith* in the shape of assertions of physiological and scientific facts, we think those who avail themselves of this method of analysis and proof, would do well to become thoroughly acquainted with such parts of natural philosophy as they wish to call to their aid to help them in enforcing their arguments.† But, once more, how completely an act of reason

\* To be more correct, however, we should say, that owing to the ellipticity of the earth's orbit, the sun is subject to a periodical variation in its apparent magnitude. Its greatest apparent diameter, when in perihelion, is  $32' 35''.6$  or  $1955''.6$ , and its least apparent magnitude when in aphelion is  $31' 30''$  or  $1890''$ . Its mean apparent diameter is therefore  $1923''$ . Therefore, the time that light takes reaching the earth *from* the sun, varies according to the perihelion and aphelion distances, but we may take eight minutes and a half as a very good *average* time.

† Dr. Cumming's endeavours to explain satisfactorily the cursing of the fig-tree, appear to us to be completely defeated by the following in Luke xxi: "Behold the fig-tree, and *all the trees*; when they now shoot forth, ye *see* and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand." The mention of "*all the trees*" in conjunction with the fig-tree cannot be twisted by any means of perversion into the Scotch Divine's service.

and not of faith were the incredulity and after-belief of St. Thomas.\* Perhaps—considering all the circumstances of the case, his having previously seen our Lord actually perform miracles, and having been so much in his society—this is one of the most extraordinary cases of incredulity on record. The Apostle refused to believe the evidence of his *sight*; seeing the print of the nails would not convince him; if he did not put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into our Lord's side, he would not believe. Instantly, however, that the sense of *touch* came to his rescue he did believe, exclaiming, "*My Lord and my God.*" We, however, have neither sight or touch to help us in our belief. Saint Paul distinctly says this in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians,† "For we walk by faith; not by sight." Those miracles, then, which the Roman Catholic Church professes to perform, are mere impostures of its priests. Were these miracles *real*, no stronger argument would need be adduced as to the reality of the Apostolic Succession. We live in an age of imposture, and a brilliant and witty writer has remarked that London is the great *metropolis* of shams;‡ well, this may be so, but there is not

\* John xx. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. † Chapter v, verse 7.

‡ "Temple Bar," August, 1863.

that wholesale religious imposture there is in the Roman Catholic countries;—there is quite enough religious shamming, though, even in England—but still not that gross attempt at deceiving the uneducated grades of the people which is found on the Continent from Madrid to St. Petersburg. Several blows have been dealt at this mighty religion of Rome, entwining itself like some beautiful though noxious reptile round the form of religion, pure and undefiled; and it has frequently been forced by its assailants to relax some portion of its hold upon her, but it has been scotched not slain, and rears again its glittering crest and spreads once more its deadly venom through the world. The Roman Catholic clergy are a dangerous hierarchy, endeavouring with all the means at their disposal, and with a perseverance and vigour which never relaxes, to enslave the minds and understanding of men. We have always thought the professors of the art of healing much more worthy of the title of successors to the Apostles than either pope, priest, or clergy; for by means of the former the blind are oftentimes made to see; the dumb to speak; and the lame to walk; and although the mandates of scientific skill are not pronounced at the Gate called Beautiful, or by Bethesda's Pool; still, although

no miraculous interference interposes itself for the relief of pain, science with its penetrating knowledge of our bodies so "fearfully and so wonderfully made" can cure, assuage, and soothe. The successors of Hippocrates, Æsculapius, and Galen, have however no pretensions to infallibility or to any superhuman skill. Not so the Roman Catholic Hierarchy; from the deceptions on the subject of the so-called St. Januarius miracle to the audaciously blasphemous mendacity of persuading their followers to send letters to the Virgin Mary,\* and then giving answers themselves, either by word of mouth or by letter, they pretend to be the immediate and infallible agents of Heaven. Yes, incredible as it may appear, accomplished, educated (!?) women—most of them unmarried, young, and beautiful—surrendered their understandings, and gave up their moral and intellectual freedom to the man Uguarte and his satellites—yes, and are now doing so to men like Uguarte, if not to this audacious imposter himself! The assertion of being able to work miracles, and the tricks which are played upon their followers by the myrmidons of the Church of Rome, are amongst

\* The public will remember the Santiago tragedy, on which occasion the Cathedral and crowds of worshippers were destroyed by fire. A man named Ugarte (Uguarte?) persuaded his deluded followers to act exactly as described in the text. Ugarte was a Priest.

the most dangerous practices to which the Priests have resort. For, of course, the superhuman power manifested in shewing an actual miracle to the people (provided they accept it *as* a superhuman manifestation of power), is a most potent method of ensuring their respect, and of weaving still closer around them the meshes of the net of superstition. "Knowledge is power," says the dangerous Hierarchy; we will keep the body of the people ignorant, and reserve to ourselves all the mighty armoury of intellectual influence. But we reserve saying more upon Romanism until a future occasion.

Let us now consider very shortly the Parables of Christ and their intention. Whatever impressions are intended to be produced on the mind of man, are always better received when addressed to his heart through the most common associations. Whether we wish to explain, to convince, to touch, or to engage, we must refer to something that is habitual, and therefore, the use of figures in eloquence is not so much to enrich and to deck, as to find admission to the soul of the hearer, by all the paths which its own habits have rendered easy of access.\* The miracles of Christ were awful manifestations of Divine power; mighty

\* G. P. R. James, in "Darnley."

works of God showing his supremacy over demons, diseases, the furious raging and roaring of elemental strife, and overcoming death itself by the mere exertion of His will. It is to be observed also, that when our Lord saw fit to work a miracle, there were often certain *human* means brought forward as accessories to the supernatural performance. Thus, on the occasion of raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus commanded the stone to be taken away, before he exclaimed "Lazarus come forth!" This is one of those miracles which was accompanied by more (perhaps) of divine manifestation than any other. The simple and dignified manner in which, previous to his arrival at the mouth of the cave where Lazarus was entombed, our Lord asserted "I am the resurrection and the life;"\* the fact that Lazarus was not only dead, but placed in a sepulchre; and furthermore that "decay's effacing fingers," and the worms of corruption were already (in that warm climate) putrifying the corpse,† constitute this as one of the grandest displays of power displayed by our Lord. What consternation in the council-chamber of the chief-priests and Pharisees succeeded this miracle! What conviction of the divine mission of Christ

\* John xi. 25.

† John xi, verse 39.

and his divine power, filled the minds of the witnesses of this grand display. The stone has been rolled away; the cave is in a state of semi-obscurity, and gleaming through the gloom are dimly seen the grave-clothes of Lazarus. Deep is the silence—the silence of Death itself—and the eager spectators are peering into the cavern more than half incredulous as to whether it be indeed possible for that corrupted corpse to be re-animated. But their doubts are soon changed into joyful certainty; for in a loud voice which penetrates the most secret places of the cavernous recesses, Jesus exclaims “Lazarus come forth!” The resuscitated disciple obeys the command, and staggers forth, encumbered by his ghastly grave-clothes into the presence of his Saviour and his friend. “Loose him and let him go!” The joyful crowd return home with their rescued brother, and all is joy and love and peace that evening in the house of Lazarus.

Far different from all we have been attempting to describe were the Parables of our Lord. They were simple teachings brought home to the minds of his hearers by those paths which the habits of those minds made most easy of access. Observe, too, the unity of idea, and the consistency which pervade these Parables:

“ *Servetur ad imum*

*Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet ;*

was our Lord's principle of instruction, and how admirably suited to such a mixed company as followed Jesus; for there were “the children of this generation wiser than the children of light;” there the sneering and incredulous Sadducee; there the hypocritical Pharisee; there the astute lawyer seeking to “entangle Him in His talk;” there, too, Schoolmen versed in controversy and skilled in the dazzling fence of logic; but there likewise the “poor in spirit,” the lowly, and those despising not instruction; those who, last, in this world, shall be first in the next—Lazarus and Dives—the poor and the rich, all listening, some with the malignity of envy and of hate, but a large number, converted, convinced, and comforted.

We have now given, in a simple and popular form, a very few of the thoughts and associations which are likely to present themselves when considering so important a subject as that of Reason and Faith. It would be easy for us to fill page after page with dissertations upon the various ideas and ingenious speculations which have occupied all sorts and conditions of men since Christ disputed with the doctors in the Temple. The enormous mass of works upon theology and biblical history



is the best argument for showing the prominent place which religion has always occupied in the minds of men. It is impossible to read the most elementary work even of profane history without perceiving how it is intermixed with the different *superstitions* of mankind (if we may be allowed to use a phrase of Gibbon).—We think all denominations of men *must* have thought of a future state; undefined, perhaps, and not founded upon revelation; but still some vague seeking after the unknown.

“Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind  
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind;  
His soul proud science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk and milky way;  
*Yet simple Nature to his hope* has giv'n  
Behind the cloud topp'd hill, a humbler heaven;  
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,  
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,  
Where slaves once more their native land behold,  
No fiends torment, nor Christians thirst for gold.  
To be content his natural desire,  
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;  
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,  
His faithful dog shall bear him company.”

It is those minds, accustomed to reduce everything to the crucible of experiment which fret and fume the most because they cannot analyse that which is incapable of any sort or kind of analysis whatsoever. Suppose some ingenious mathematician were to write an elaborate treatise upon the

possibility of squaring the circle; he might exhaust all his ingenuity and use all his eloquence, and yet a mere child would know the utter impossibility of a circle becoming by *any* means a square. But *infinitely* more absurd is it to *reason* upon what is "incomprehensible." \* In the case of the square and circle we have two distinct ideas. In the case of infinity we have positively no distinct idea at all. We are well aware that we have not paid in this essay much respect to the pride of human knowledge; but if we consider that our psychological capacities are to be developed throughout all eternity (for good or evil), it is not at all illogical to assert that at present we only contain the *germs* of future acquirements to be constantly added to *infinitely*. We cannot conceive even what infinity *means*; our impressions regarding it are vague, dreamy, and have their termination exactly where they commence. We cannot imagine a perpetual *esse*—a state in which, in the words of the poet—

"Nothing there is to come, and nothing past;  
But an eternal now does ever last."

The sacred writings must be taken as a whole. Possibly the Acts of the Apostles† are untrust-

\* We use the word *incomprehensible* in its full *Athanasian* sense.

† Paul sometimes contradicts point blank the statements contained in the Acts of the Apostles. (Compare Gal. ch. i. and

worthy *as a whole*; possibly the seventh verse, fifth chapter, First Epistle of St. John, "For there are those that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," is a spurious verse (vide Porson's letters to Archdeacon Travis) notwithstanding Dr. Thirlwall's (Bishop of St. David's) ingenuity and eloquence in favour of its being genuine. Possibly many facts of the Scriptures may be found contradictory, interpolated or otherwise not to be received by us; but as a whole they contain all things necessary to salvation. The student or enquirer will find the Bible thoroughly and liberally discussed in many of our periodical publications. There have been some extremely fine articles upon this subject in the *Westminster, Quarterly*, and *Edinburgh Reviews*, and no doubt the gifted and learned men who

ii. with Acts ch. ix. xi.; xxx. and xv. Far from conceding the presumed superiority of the original Apostles, he treats it with contemptuous irony, alleging that while they "seemed to be somewhat," they proved to be utterly worthless in the discussion of the great circumcision question. "*As the Acts of the Apostles, however untrustworthy as a whole*, appears to be based in part on previous narrative collections, we follow it here provisionally in its general outline. If the story of St. Stephen be more or less mythical, it may yet embody prevalent ideas and feelings, &c."—Vide "*Westminster Review*," No. xlvii., July, 1863.—Article on "*Growth of Christianity*."

wrote them will still continue instructing mankind by their labours in the course of freeing men from the dogmas of an unreasonable "orthodoxy." Professor Jowett receives the heartfelt thanks of every liberal-minded student for his philological and theological labours. He is certainly the Porson of *our* time, profound in his erudition and liberal in his sentiments.

Of all the Apostles, Paul was, perhaps, the most fervent in spirit; but of all the Apostles his mental constitution was the most faulty and intemperate. We certainly do not consider that an extended view of the *mundane* effects of Christianity was presented to his mental vision. "For him as for the other Apostles, the advent of the Messiah was a constantly expected and never distant event."\*

There are probably links in the chain of the Apostolic writings which are lost. Any *genuine* remains of the "Apostle" Barnabas (Acts xiv. 14, ix, 24, xiii, 1) of Hernas, the contemporary (Romans xvi. 14,) and Clement, the highly commended and gifted fellow-labourer of St. Paul (Phil. iv. 3.), could scarcely be regarded as less sacred than those of Mark and Luke, of whom

\* "Westminster Review," No. xlvii, July, 1863.—Article on "Growth of Christianity."

*personally we know less.* It is purely a question of criticism.\* At the present day, the critics best competent to determine it, have agreed in opinion, that the *extant* writings ascribed to Barnabas and Hermas are wholly spurious—the frauds of a later age. Most probably, however, they contributed to the Scriptures, and of course any *genuine* writings of theirs would be by critics received as “Apostolic.”

Schlegel, apparently in despair of being able to reconcile modern science and the Old Testament, advances an extremely bold and daring theory † which he terms the Ante-Mosaic Revelation. He says that the volume of Holy Writ, as it is transmitted to us, and was first commenced about three-and-thirty centuries ago, does not exclude the possibility of an earlier sacred tradition in the twenty-four centuries which preceded it. So far, indeed, (he continues) is the supposition of such an original revelation from being inconsistent with Scripture, that, on the contrary, it contains explicit allusions to the fact, that such a manifold enlightenment was imported to the first man, as well as to that patriarch who, after the destruction

\* See “Neander’s Ecclesiastical History,” ii. 329—*translation*; “Edinburgh Review,” No. clxxiv.; and many other works upon the subject.

† Schlegel’s “Philosophy of Life,” Lecture iii.

of the primeval world of giants, was the second progenitor of mankind. Schlegel says much more than this, for not content with this daring theory, he proceeds thus: "But those older revelations, imparted to the *first man* and the second progenitor of mankind, are expressly laid down as the ground work of that evangel of the creation, which forms the introduction to the whole volume of Scripture, and furnishes us thereby with a key to understand the history and religion of the primitive world—or to speak absolutely, the true Genesis of the existing world, its history and its science." Now, by advancing such hypothesis as this idea of an Ante-Mosaic Revelation, of course *anything* may be supposed; (imagined!) but it is rather too much to give men to understand (if our interpretation of the German philosopher's meaning be correct) that if an Ante-Mosaic Revelation were now extant, we should have no difficulty in reconciling the Mosaic-Revelation with scientific advancement—to use a cant term of the day, "that Science and Revelation are twin sisters"—which those most capable of judging have long ago given up as hopeless. During the very early ages of the Christian church, those who professed the religion of Jesus, lived in daily expectation of the consummation of the

prophecies regarding the end of this world and the final judgment of mankind. To quote the magnificent language of Gibbon, "*In modern times, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions. Their admission of supernatural truth is much less an active consent than a cold and passive acquiescence. Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of Deity. But, in the first ages of Christianity, the situation of mankind was extremely different. The most curious or the most credulous among the pagans, were often persuaded to enter into a society which asserted an actual claim to miraculous powers. The primitive Christians perpetually trod on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by demons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness, and from death itself, by the supplications of the church. \* \* \* \** The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and of revelation.\*

\* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. 15.

We have quoted Gibbon and others merely to show forth opinions adverse to the system of *dogmatic* orthodoxy. Every man has a right to think for *himself*. With how many are the most tremendous doctrines received with "a cold and passive acquiescence," rather than with an "active consent!" Let us all examine the writings and opinions of those gifted men who have devoted and are devoting their whole lives to the elucidation of truth: and let us always remember that no man is justified in accepting any creed without thoroughly examining and searching for himself. But let us always remember that homogeneous principles of doctrinal unity are totally incompatible with the heterogeneous amalgamations of eclecticism. Examine the tenets of the different sects and you will indeed be astounded at the enormous mass of polemical erudition displayed by all. From sources the most remote, by channels the most hidden from the view of ordinary men, forth come laden the great argosies of knowledge and of erudition. *Human* learning seems to be traced to a period so remote, that to it might almost seem applicable the words of Dante:

"Dinanze a me non fur cose create  
Se non eterne."



If you have time to search amidst the vast store-houses of knowledge you are fortunate indeed. For, says the Preacher, "The wisdom of a learned man *cometh by opportunity of leisure*.\* A few words in conclusion on the subject of *literal interpretation*. Suppose we take Luke ix. 27, and reason upon it—"But I tell you *of a truth*, there be some here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God."

And compare this passage with that which has caused so much controversy and doubt;—"If I will that he *tarry till I come*, what is that to thee?"

Now, a literal acceptance of these passages would teach us to believe that those alluded to in Luke ix. 27, are still alive, and will live until Christ's second coming; but do we receive them thus? Even those most imbued with dogmatic orthodoxy do not thus entertain them; and yet it is positively asserted in Luke ix. 27, that "*of a truth* there be some *here*, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God."

We could multiply instances, but must now conclude the very few pages we have written upon the subject of mysteries which even the angels of God desire to solve, and which are objects of reverential contemplation to all the Host of Heaven.

We have treated the subject in a plain and popular manner, and have as far as possible avoided all scholastic polemics; have said nothing

\* Ecclesiasticus, ch. xxxviii. v. 24, 25.

concerning priestly absolution and sacerdotal chrism; and avoiding the analysis of those ponderous tomes in which are inscribed the records of the Vatican, of the Casa Professa, of the Conference of Poissy, of the Council of Trent, and of the Diet of Augsburg. Ignatius, Xavier, Laynez, Bobadilla, Father Francis,\* Bossuet, Salmeron, Mabillon, and the magnificent literature of their age may be consulted with eminent advantage by those desirous of studying the annals of the Church. In fact, from the age of the Fathers of the Church down to our own, a huge mass of Literature is open to our perusal.

Hallam's *History of the Middle Ages* is full of information for those who have not time, or, perhaps, inclination, to submit to the ordeal necessary to be undergone by students who desire to draw their information from the great originals themselves. It would have been easy for us to have lingered over Antinomian extravagances; Luther's *Philippics*; the tenets of Averrhoism; and to have enlarged upon the clashing doctrines of scholastic divines from the days of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus down to our own, but we preferred treating the subject of Faith and Reason in a broad and generalising manner.

Religion, of some sort or other, has always been a necessity of man's existence. From the twilight of the remotest antiquity down to the time when

\* Francis Borgia.

“ ——— The Northmen came,  
 Fix'd on each vale a Runic name,  
 Rear'd high their altar's rugged stone,  
 And gave their gods the land they won ; ”

and from them again down to the extremely decorous and “respectable”\* age in which we have the advantage of living, and in which the worship of —Mammon is so devoutly practised.

But let us endeavour to have more Religion in Common Life, transmuting into refined gold, the humble dust of daily opportunity.

Let us have faith in the promises held out to us, of an infinitely happier and more exalted state of being than our present human, mortal, and finite organization is capable of. Let us teach our Reason† patience; and pray God to strengthen our Faith. Then Faith and Reason will help, strengthen, and adorn each other, and by brightening our lives whilst here below, render us so happy as to make the earth we tread seem holy ground.

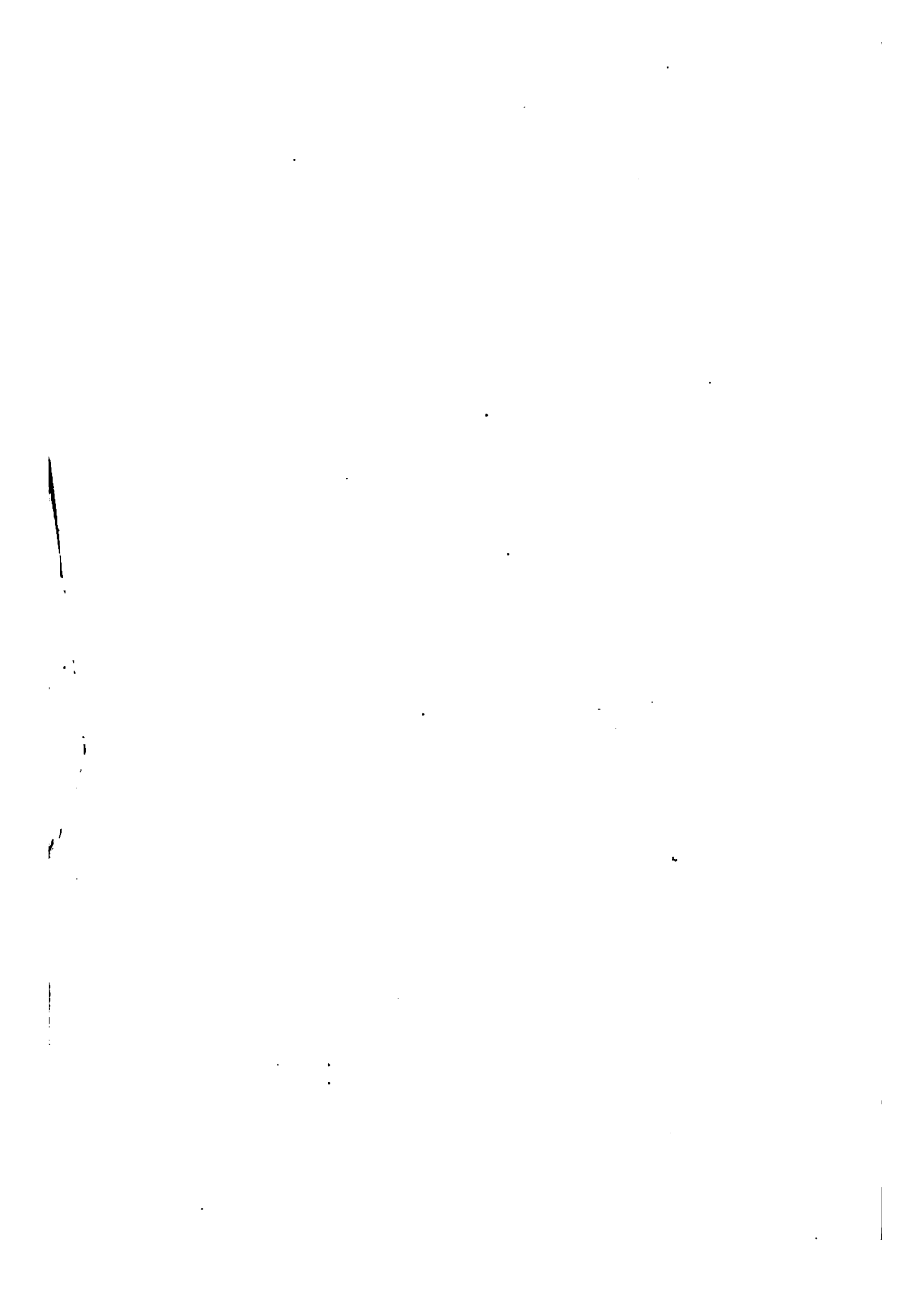
And when we depart hence and are no more seen—if we have rightly understood the mutual relationship of Faith and Reason, and thereby brought Religion into our commonest dealings—we do *not* leave a blank behind us, for in the beautiful language of the philosopher-poet:—

“ The place which once a good man's foot hath trod,  
 Remains a consecrated spot for ever.”

\* This word “respectable” covers a multitude of sins, although not *exactly* in the manner in which *Charity* is asserted to do so in Scripture.

† *Patience* and comfort of thy Holy Word.—(Collects of the Church of England.)







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